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61. (New) A production apparatus according to Claim 60, wherein said crucible has an inner diameter of at least 250 mm.

REMARKS

Claims 45-47 and 49-61 are pending. Claims 45, 47, 49, 50 and 53 have been amended to make Applicant's invention more clear. Claims 54-61 have been added to provide Applicant with a more complete scope of protection. Claims 45, 54 and 60 are in independent form.

An early and favorable action on the merits is requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York Office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE TO CLAIMS

45. (Three Times Amended) A production apparatus for producing a crystal, said apparatus comprising:

a crucible divided into a plurality of stages, each stage containing a crystal precursor material; and

a heater arranged to heat said crucible,

wherein each stage of said plurality of stages of said crucible has formed therein a degassing hole in a side wall portion thereof for discharging an impurity gas produced when refining the crystal precursor material by adding a scavenger thereto, and

wherein a lower portion of a first stage of the plurality of stages is positioned to cover an upper edge of a wall portion of a second stage of the plurality of stages, [the overall] an inner height of each stage of said plurality of stages is 10mm to 50mm, the degassing hole has a diameter of 1mm to 5 mm, and a fluoride crystal is formed from the precursor material.

47. (Amended) A production apparatus according to Claim 45, wherein each stage of said plurality of stages of said crucible has formed therein at least two degassing holes in the wall portion thereof.

49. (Amended) A production apparatus according to Claim 45, wherein each stage of said plurality of stages of said crucible has formed therein a connecting hole at a bottom center portion thereof.

50. (Amended) A production apparatus according to Claim 45, wherein said crucible has [a bottom face of] a cylindrical shape.

53. (Amended) A production apparatus according to Claim 45, [further comprising:

a region for receiving a material, said region formed by superimposing a plurality of crucibles; and

a] wherein the crucible [without a] has no connecting hole [as a] at the lowermost stage.